



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/615,859	07/09/2003	Stephen Reif	0308.67399	9977
24978	7590	01/03/2006		
GREER, BURNS & CRAIN			EXAMINER	
300 S WACKER DR			CINTINS, IVARS C	
25TH FLOOR				
CHICAGO, IL 60606			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			1724	

DATE MAILED: 01/03/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/615,859	REIF, STEPHEN	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Ivars C. Cintins	1724	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 11 October 2005.
- 2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-12 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 10-12 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 1-9 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 1/21/2005.
- 4) Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) Other: _____.

Applicant's election with traverse of Group I, claims 1-9, in the reply filed on July 5, 2005 is acknowledged. Applicant argues that since claim 10 has been amended "to include the method steps of claim 1 and to recite ... a water softening apparatus," the restriction requirement is moot. It is pointed out, however, that a statement of intended use is not a structural limitation; and therefore, although the preamble of claim 10 has been amended to recite a water softening apparatus for use in a method including the steps of claim 1, these added recitations are not deemed to impart any additional structural limitations to apparatus claim 10. Accordingly, the process of Group I could be carried out with another apparatus different from that of Group II, as explained in the previous Office action; and/or the apparatus of Group II could be used in another process, different from that of Group I.

The requirement is still deemed proper and is therefore made **FINAL**. Claims 10-12 are withdrawn from further consideration, as being directed to a non-elected invention.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Zabinski (U.S. Patent No. 5,699,272) in view of Muller et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,383,920). Zabinski discloses carrying out multiple impedance determinations (col. 1, lines 54-65) and timer determinations (col. 5, lines 23-28); and further discloses shutting down the system if a preset time period (e.g. 99 minutes) is reached (col. 5, lines 26-28). Accordingly, this primary reference discloses the claimed invention with the exception of triggering an alarm signal. Muller et al. teaches

monitoring the water quality in a water purification system, which system may include softeners (col. 4, line 50), and further teaches (col. 3, lines 46-48) sounding an alarm and shutting the system down when the water quality is below a predetermined value. It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide the water softening system of Zabinski with the audible alarm of Muller et al., in order to warn the user of this system that it has been shut down due to an aberration in the regeneration process (see col. 5, line 27-28 of Zabinski).

Tucci et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,320,010) discloses a similar water softener system having an alarm (see col. 7, lines 2-7).

Applicant's arguments filed March 7, 2005 have been noted and carefully considered, but no longer appear to be relevant in view of the new grounds of rejection.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to I. Cintins whose telephone number is 571-272-1155. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Mr. Duane Smith, can be reached at 571-272-1166.

The centralized facsimile number for the USPTO is **571-273-8300**.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR

Art Unit: 1724

system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).



Ivars Cintins
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 1724

I. Cintins
December 23, 2005